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ABSTRACT

Anthropologists participating in the Symposium on Inter-Ethnic Conflict in South America (Barbados, January 1971) analyzed formal reports of tribal situations in several Latin American countries and determined that Indians of America remain dominated by a colonial situation which originated with the conquest and which still persists today. As a consequence, the several States, the religious missions, and social scientists (particularly anthropologists) must assume responsibility for immediate action to halt this aggression and contribute significantly to the process of Indian liberation. Recommendations for State responsibility include guaranteeing the right to remain Indian and recognizing that Indian groups possess rights prior to those of other national constituencies. The responsibility of the religious missions includes overcoming the intrinsic Herodianism of the evangelical process, and assuming a position of true respect for Indian culture. Anthropology must stop its previous practices of scientism, hypocrisy, and opportunism, and commit itself to the struggle for Indian liberation. The document emphasizes that the Indian must be an agent of his own destiny. (KM)

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Declaration of Barbados

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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Programme to Combat Racism
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Declaration of Barbados *

FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE INDIANS

The anthropologists participating in the Symposium on Inter-Ethnic Conflict in South America, meeting in Barbados, January 25-30 1971, after analysing the formal reports of the tribal populations' situation in several countries, drafted and agreed to make public the following statement. In this manner, we hope to define and clarify this critical problem of the American continent and to contribute to the Indian struggle for liberation.

The Indians of America remain dominated by a colonial situation which originated with the conquest and which persists today within many Latin American nations. The result of this colonial structure is that lands inhabited by Indians are judged to be free and unoccupied territory open to conquest and colonisation. Colonial domination of the aboriginal groups, however, is only a reflection of the more generalised system of the Latin American states' external dependence upon the imperialist metropolitan powers. The internal order of our dependent countries leads them to act as colonising powers in their relations with the indigenous peoples. This places the several nations in the dual role of the exploited and the exploiters, and this in turn projects not only a false image of Indian society and its historical development, but also a distorted vision of what constitutes the present national society.

We have seen that this situation manifests itself in repeated acts of aggression directed against the aboriginal groups and cultures. There occur both active interventions to "protect" Indian society as well as massacres and forced migrations from the homelands. These acts and policies are not unknown to the armed forces and other governmental agencies in several countries. Even the official "Indian policies" of the Latin-American states are explicitly directed towards the destruction of aboriginal culture. These policies are employed to manipulate and control Indian populations in order to consolidate the status of existing social groups and classes, and only diminish the possibility that Indian society may free itself from colonial domination and settle its own future.

As a consequence, we feel the several States, the religious missions and social scientists, primarily anthropologists, must assume the unavoidable responsibilities for immediate action to halt this aggression and contribute significantly to the process of Indian liberation.

The Responsibility of the State

Irrelevant are those Indian policy proposals that do not seek a radical break with the existing social situation; namely, the termination of colo-

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nial relationships, internal and external; breaking down of the class system of human exploitation and ethnic domination; a displacement of economic and political power from a limited group or an oligarchic minority to the popular majority; the creation of a truly multi-ethnic state in which each ethnic group possesses the right to self-determination and the free selection of available social and cultural alternatives.

Our analysis of the Indian policy of the several Latin American nation states reveals a common failure of this policy by its omissions and by its actions. The several states avoid granting protection to the Indian groups' rights to land and to be left alone, and fail to apply the law strictly with regard to areas of national expansion. Similarly, the states sanction policies which have been and continue to be colonial and class-oriented.

This failure implicates the State in direct responsibility for and connivance with the many crimes of genocide and ethnocide that we have been able to verify. These crimes tend to be repeated and responsibility must rest with the State which remains reluctant to take the following essential measures:-

1
guaranteeing to all the Indian populations by virtue of their ethnic distinction, the right to be and to remain themselves, living according to their own customs and moral order, free to develop their own culture;

2
recognition that Indian groups possess rights prior to those of other national constituencies. The State must recognise and guarantee each Indian society's territory in land, legalising it as perpetual, inalienable collective property, sufficiently extensive to provide for population growth;

3
sanctioning of Indian groups' right to organize and to govern in accordance with their own traditions. Such a policy would not exclude members of Indian society from exercising full citizenship, but would in turn exempt them from compliance with those obligations that jeopardise their cultural integrity.

4
extending to Indian society the same economic, social, educational and health assistance as the rest of the national population receives. Moreover, the State has an obligation to attend to those many deficiencies and needs that stem from Indians' submission of the colonial situation. Above all the State must impede their further exploitation by other sectors of the national society, including the official agents of their protection.

5
establishing contacts with still isolated tribal groups is the States' responsibility, given the dangers - biological, social and ecological - that their first contact with agents of the national society represents.

6
protection from the crimes and outrages, not always the direct responsibility of civil or military personnel, intrinsic to the expansion process of the national frontier.

7
definition of the national public authority responsible for relations with Indian groups inhabiting its territory; this obligation cannot be transferred or delegated at any time or under any circumstances.

Responsibility of the Religious Missions

Evangelisation, the work of the religious missions in Latin America also reflects and complements the reigning colonial situation with the values of which it is imbued. The missionary presence has always implied the imposition of criteria and patterns of thought and behaviour alien to the colonised Indian societies. A religious pretext has too often justified the economic and human exploitation of the aboriginal population.

The inherent ethnocentric aspect of the evangelisation process is also a component of the colonialist ideology and is based on the following characteristics:

1
its essentially discriminatory nature implicit in the hostile relationship to Indian culture conceived as pagan and heretical;

2
its vicarial aspect, implying the re-identification of the Indian and his consequent submission in exchange for future supernatural compensations;

3
its spurious quality given the common situation of missionaries seeking only some form of personal salvation, material or spiritual;

4
the fact that the missions have become a great land and labour enterprise, in conjunction with the dominant imperial interests.

As a result of this analysis we conclude that the suspension of all missionary activity is the most appropriate policy on behalf of both Indian society as well as the moral integrity of the churches involved. Until this objective can be realized the missions must support and contribute to Indian liberation in the following manner:

1
overcome the intrinsic Herodianism of the evangelical process, itself a mechanism of colonialisation, Europeanisation and alienation of Indian society;

2
assume a position of true respect for Indian culture, ending the long and shameful history of despotism and intolerance characteristic of missionary work, which rarely manifests sensitivity to aboriginal religious sentiments and values;

3
halt both the theft of Indian property by religious missionaries who appropriate labour, lands and natural resources as their own, and the indifference in the face of Indian expropriation by third parties;

4
extinguish the sumptuous and lavish spirit of the missions themselves, expressed in various forms but all too often based on exploitation of Indian labour.

5
stop the competition among religious groups and confessions for Indian souls - a common occurence leading to the buying and selling of believers and internal strife provoked by conflicting religious loyalties;

6
suppress the secular practice of removing Indian children from their families for long periods in boarding schools where they are imbued with values not their own, converting them in this way into marginal individuals, incapable of living either in the larger national society or their native communities;

7
break with the pseudo-moralist isolation which imposes a false puritanical ethic, incapacitating the Indian for coping with the national society - an ethic which the churches have been unable to impose on that same national society;

8
abandon those blackmail procedures implicit in the offering of goods and services to Indian society in return for total submission;

9
suspend immediately all practices of population displacement or concentration in order to evangelise and assimilate more effectively, a process that often provokes an increase in morbidity, mortality and family disorganization among Indian communities;

10
and the criminal practice of serving as intermediaries for the exploitation of Indian labour.

To the degree that the religious missions do not assume these minimal obligations they, too, must be held responsible by default for crimes of ethnocide and connivance with genocide.

Finally, we recognize that, recently, dissident elements within the churches are engaging in a conscious and radical self-evaluation of the evangelical process. The denunciation of the historical failure of the missionary task is now a common conclusion of such critical analyses.

The Responsibility of Anthropology

Anthropology took form within and became an instrument of colonial domination, openly or surreptitiously; it has often rationalised and justified in scientific language the domination of some people by others. The discipline has continued to supply information and methods of action useful for maintaining, reaffirming and disguising social relations of a colonial nature. Latin America has been and is no exception, and with growing frequency we note nefarious Indian action programmes and the dissemination of stereotypes and myths distorting and masking the Indian situation - all pretending to have their basis in alleged scientific anthropological research.

A false awareness of this situation has led many anthropologists to adopt equivocal positions. These night be classed in the following types:

1
a <u>scientism</u> which negates any relationship between academic research and

the future of those peoples who form the object of such investigation, thus eschewing political responsibility which the relation contains and implies;

2
an hypocrisy manifest in the rhetorical protestation based on first principles which skilfully avoids any commitment in a concrete situation;

3
an opportunism th[illegible] although it may recognize the present painful situation of the Indian at the same time rejects any possibility of transforming action by proposing the need "to do something" within the established order. This latter position, of course only reaffirms and continues the system.

The anthropology now required in Latin America is not that which relates to Indians as objects of study, but rather that which perceives the colonial situation and commits itself to the struggle for liberation. In this context we see anthropology providing on the one hand, the colonised peoples those data and interpretations both about themselves and their colonisers useful for their own fight for freedom, and on the other hand, a redefinition of the distorted image of Indian communities extant in the national society, thereby unmasking its colonial nature with its supportive ideology.

In order to realise the above objectives, anthropologists have an obligation to take advantage of all junctures within the present order to take action on behalf of the Indian communities. Anthropologists must denounce systematically by any and all means cases of genocide and those practices conducive to ethnocide. At the same time, it is imperative to generate new concepts and explanatory categories from the local and national social reality in order to overcome the subordinate situation of the anthropologist regarded as the mere "verifier" of alien theroies.

The Indian as an Agent of his own Destiny

That Indians organize and lead their own liberation movement is essential, or it ceases to be liberating. When non-Indians pretend to represent Indians, even on occasion assuming the leadership of the latter's groups, a new colonial situation is established. This is yet another expropriation of the Indian populations' inalienable right to determine their future.

Within this perspective, it is important to emphasise in all its historical significance, the growing ethnic consciousness observable at present among Indian societies throughout the continent. More peoples are assuming direct control over their defence against the ethnocidal and genocidal policies of the national society. In this conflict, by no means novel, we can perceive the beginnings of a pan-Latin-American movement and some cases too, of explicit solidarity with still other oppressed social groups.

We wish to reaffirm here the right of Indian populations to experiment with and adopt their own self-governing development and defence programmes. These policies should not be forced

to correspond with national economic and socio-political exigencies of the moment. Rather, the transformation of national society is not possible if there remain groups, such as Indians, who do not feel free to command their own destiny. Then, too, the maintenance of Indian society's cultural and social integrity, regardless of its relative numerical insignificance, offers alternative approaches to the traditional well-trodden paths of the national society.

Barbados, 30 January 1971

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